

Linda Clair
Seven-day Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Centre – September 2019
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 3c – Monday afternoon discussion session

Question: I was really touched by your exchange with L.. The evening before I was reading Nisargadatta about meditation in *I Am That*. He was saying that you can't be part-time, you have to really prioritise. He was saying specifically to look at your activities and interests and see how much it costs you to take care of yourself and whoever you're responsible for, and limit your activities to just focus on what you have to do. Then the rest of the time totally devote to your meditation. I've been really busy with that because this is the third-year anniversary of my first sit with you. I made this commitment for three years.

Linda: Oh, did you? I remember you made a commitment, I couldn't remember how long.

Question: Well, it was three weeks and I got through that. And then it was three months. (laughter) Then the only thing to do after that was three years. And now there's even more pressure on my life the way it is because of that choice. I'm not sure if I have a question but I have made that decision to leave my house and leave my job so I can actually prioritise. Because I've found one of the things that has eluded me in that three years is that I have bouts of regular practice, but then it's very difficult with my work shifts and I lose it. I try not to worry about it too much but I don't want to have to do that anymore.

Linda: So what are you going to do? Are you going to move and still work?

Question: I'm going to try that and still work, but I'll hopefully find something less arduous. Coming on retreat now, it's bunched between two long groups of night shift and it's getting more and more difficult to manage.

Linda: Yes, you do have to prioritise it and some people don't want to hear that. But a lot of people are here, including you, on their time off. And instead of going on a holiday – although I think you've just been on a holiday haven't you? (laughter)

Question: Who told you that? (laughter)

Linda: I just heard from someone. I know everything. (laughing)

Question: That time away really concretised that. The meditation sensitises me and I find that really difficult in my work environment. A certain sensitivity and momentum build up and I can't manage professionally. Anyway, it felt like a real push, reading that. I don't know if I'd never seen that paragraph before but it was strong when I read it.

Linda: I remember him saying that. He had his family and his cigarette factory, and he had to support his family, but every spare moment he spent doing this. And yet he still had a family and all that stuff, but he still found time for this. And you can, whatever your circumstances – and I'm not saying you shouldn't give up your job, I'm sure a nightshift job can do that. It *is* good to have some sort of structure.

Question: No, I need to work. It's just that intensity of acute mental health is too much.

Linda: Yes, so?

Question: So I really don't know what's going to happen because I've been trying to keep my home and my job and my relationship and my work and meditation together for these three years. I've been really frightened to – I feel like I'm pulling the pin on the structures in my life in a way.

Linda: Well, it will be interesting to see what happens. It might be great. Three years, hmm.

Linda: Any questions? Comments? It doesn't have to be a question.

Question: Because the mic is so close, 😊 and because I get so much out people's comments and questions. Some of the things reflect what you say and are so good for the sittings. Regarding the five -thirty sit, I didn't realise I'd created such a comfort zone with the sitting practice over the time I've been coming. I know the schedule, and knew how much fear and resistance was there about the intense pain, so I was always scared of doing anything longer – "How could I put with that without screaming out." Then last retreat the five-thirty sit popped up and without thinking about it, all that went away, all that fear. There was a deep desire to do it but there was this fear around how to stay with that much fire and intensity, and the drama that I would create inside. So I feel that just having that there and doing it, something shifted that I didn't know would shift.

Linda: Hmm, good.

Question: The question's gone now. Thank you, I'm really happy I met you. I've had one teacher in this life, and I've met a few other people, and I trust you. I'm here and this is very new – I tend to be a bit mad and this is, in a way, is very dry. When things happen in meditation I'm like a mad Sufi, I want to sing about it! That's what's going on.

Linda: Have you ever sat with such a solid group?

Question: I have, yes, with Osho in Pune. With him there was a room for the madness but also it was very much about meditation for me. It was a different flavour but in the end it's all the same.

Linda: It all the same. And it can appear a bit dry and cold and austere but it's not.

Question: With me, it opens up this endless possibility that's, "Wow!" If I don't put a limit on it there is no limit.

Linda: Well, there isn't it. There's no limit and that's what you realise, there isn't. That is the deepest realisation – well, the deepest one I've had – that there is no limit. Things keep happening and it keeps becoming more and more exciting. That excitement – once the fear goes – there's real

excitement, this incredibly deep excitement of limitlessness. I don't have to be this person. That's scary while there's still fear there – the ultimate fear.

Question: When this fine awareness happens where you're watching it all and it's an effort and then suddenly it's like you're flying through space or something and you're right there, it's exquisite. What blows me away is the fear because it's beautiful, and yet the mind comes back with all these reasons you can't do that.

Linda: Well, why not? And when you look at it closely, the why not is because of fear.

Question: It's so vulnerable. Sometimes you're looking around, although I don't want to look, but then...

Linda: You're not the only one. Most people are looking. (laughter)

Question: I'm really grateful to be here. It's a big thing for me, it feels big in my life.

Linda: Well, this will finish off. You keep doing this now and it will finish you off. You started it with Osho and did a lot of work. If you keep going – and you will...

Question: When you were talking to the guy at the end this morning, you were saying that, "If you find a teacher you trust and they suggest..." thing. So I would like some guidance. I want to be able to sit again but I find it really difficult. Any tips?

Linda: Any tips for in between?

Question: Yes, because it changes my day. If I sit there's a little more space around. I love it but then I watch YouTube and stupid stuff.

Linda: Well, what's been happening with a few people who were at the Oxford retreat is they've been having Skypes. I'm not trying to advertise Skypes at all but they're going through the same thing – at first all they want to do is sit, and then the motivation starts to wane a bit. So that contact, and it can be for just half an hour, gets them going. That half an hour motivating, talking about what's happening, just that contact, is making a huge difference for them. So it's not an ad for that but it's incredibly valuable for quite a few people. And also, if people know that I'll probably be over there twice a year.

Sitting with a group sometimes is really good too, knowing that you're not alone. Regular sitting with a group is really, really good. But sitting by yourself, it is hard. I used to just hang out around my teacher as much as I could. I went to twice-weekly stuff. I hung around like a bad smell. (laughing) It was the same with all of them. That really motivated me. I don't know how I would have gone by myself, because I could get quite disheartened and deluded in just a few days, and then I'd see him and I'd be, "Oh, okay, okay, this is possible. And I would go and see other teachers who came around because I was near Byron and everyone used to go there. But really, I had my main teacher, I just stuck with him and then my Zen teacher. I didn't really need the rest of it. But I did see them regularly and I felt I needed to see them pretty regularly.

Question: What I feel I understand here is that this is going to annihilate me and that's not easy. I think I want to sit because it makes my day a little better. But if I understand what's happening with you here maybe I can go back now and it's not necessarily going to make my daily life better.

Linda: No, it won't make it better. (laughter) It won't make anything better. You won't be happier. In fact, you might be more challenged in your daily life, and you tend to use that. And you get tested again and again and again, "How much do you want this?" It's not handed to anyone on a plate. So you get tested all the time, "How much do you want this?", in different ways. Everyone's got their challenges in their life. Nobody gets off easily. But being around someone does energise you, gives you that motivation. So you've got this, and then in another month the Newbury retreat. Come to Barcelona too. (laughter)

Linda: Are you still feeling tired N.? Have a lot of rest.

Question: I normally like to go "full." But it's been a surprise. I'm just being very patient at the moment. I did have a sleep today. I set the timer and the next thing I know the timer was beeping. I must have dropped right off, I must have really needed it. Seven years of meditation has taken its toll. (laughing) I think I've been in shock quite often. I've been working hard at it. That's probably a good thing, what's going on right now.

Linda: Yes.

Question: It feels very different. It still feels like there's constant pressure, not just when I'm sitting but a lot throughout the day. But I feel really grounded a lot of the time. A lot of emotions but at the same time there's this centre that I've found that's quite attractive, it pulls me in.

Linda: So yes, take it easy. This retreat, take it easy, don't push yourself at all.

Question: I talk such rubbish sometimes, well mostly.

Linda: Well, it doesn't matter because I've got no idea what you said. (laughter)

Question: In telling you earlier how I was, I missed something that was the most relevant thing. So I felt really silly at lunch having given you this picture of how I was. There was a lot of difference in there. I've had a really great afternoon of just being able to sit in peace.

Linda: Well, I told you that you looked good.

Question: Yes, it was great. I was so sorry to deny what you said. (laughing) I was pushing it aside because I wanted the bad picture to be up there. I felt so silly when I really remembered what was happening.

Linda: Well, we tend to do that, we look at what's wrong in what's there.

Question: Yes, so it's been a very different day. I felt peace – not peaceful – but peace for a great part of the afternoon.

Linda: It's funny because that's how you looked when you were sitting this morning and you said you didn't feel peace – you looked almost angelic sitting there.

Question: Yes, it felt angelic. Peace is a really unusual thing. (laughing)

Linda: I remember the first time I felt real peace. It was the most amazing thing. It was like peace had become tangible and solid. It was something quite amazing because I didn't think I wanted peace. I thought I wanted excitement and all the experiences and stuff. But the peace, ahh, yes.

You've been very quiet N. (Yes, for good reason.) What's the reason?

Question: I find myself in a very unusual situation. I finally surrendered to the practice. My expectations when I sit, and things I think I should be doing, things I ought to be experiencing – it's just changed. It's quite refreshing but very confusing and very contrasting. So I go from feeling well to feeling unwell, and I try to treat it with equanimity no matter what arises and just see what it is. It's very different. My meditation has changed quite a bit. It's not particularly peaceful or fulfilling. Every time I sit I don't know! The other thing, my surrender is to the practice and to sit as still as I can and to watch as ably as I can. It's changed my approach. It started at home. I sit a couple of times a day. I went, "Look, I'm not really fully sitting here, I'm just rolling along with this habit I've got," and that sharpened up my meditation practice. I've tried to bring it into this retreat and will be interested to see if you can offer any advice, or if I'm actually headed in the wrong direction, or it's a fantasy I've created, or any comments you could offer me.

Linda: No, it's good. Go into each sitting with as little intention as possible. The only intention is to sit through till the bell, sit as still as you can – whatever else happens, happens – come back to your breath.

But the intention to feel anything in particular – really look at that. You can't help but want it to be a certain way. You start to feel something and you go, "Oh, that's it, that's what I want to feel," and you attach to it and want to repeat it because it feels good.

But sometimes the most valuable, deepest sits are the ones where you don't feel so great. Like when I was looking at D. and I said she looked really good sitting but inside there was a lot of turmoil. And you've got to be prepared to do this for as long as it takes. And when you accept that and you're prepared to do that, whatever, it's a big thing, it's a huge thing.

Question: I thought I was but I realised I actually wasn't. I don't know even if I am now but I'd like to be prepared for that and to just go forward with whatever it takes.

Linda: Yes, so just keep going.